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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7357
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3378
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 5777
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RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA 3448
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RABAT 001419

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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/DAS GRAY AND CARPENTER AND NEA/MAG

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [MO](#)

SUBJECT: MOROCCAN ELECTIONS: ISLAMISTS TO GROW BUT NO GREEN WAVE, NEW PARLIAMENT TO LOOK MOSTLY THE SAME

REF: RABAT 1417

Classified by Ambassador Thomas Riley for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: We project the September 7 election for the Lower House of Parliament will return only a modest change in the Chamber, though it could produce a different-looking government. We expect 17 parties in the new House, none with a majority, none even with more than half the seats in any future government coalition. We think the now-largest party, the rural/Berber Mouvement Populaire (MP) will remain on top.

Close behind, the Islamic-oriented Party of Justice and Development (PJD) will gain the most, and could end up in the government. The PJD's popular vote may exceed 25 percent. This could count when the parties begin negotiations, and the King, who holds the final decision, looks at his choices. Another likely winner, among a few independents, will be the King's former "number two." Stagnant formerly leading parties, the Socialists and the Istiqlal and the Royalist RNI along with some smaller parties will be on the short end. (Projected seat count by party is below para. 4.) End Summary.

Background: The King calls the shots; how we called ours

¶2. (C) Reftel laid out the broad political themes playing out in Morocco's September 7 general parliamentary elections.

A total of 325 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, parliament's directly-elected lower house, are at stake. The King is not bound by the results, as he chooses a new government, but is under pressure to reflect the tally and has indicated his intent to do so. We believe he will not only consider the number of seats won but also look to the popular vote in making his decision. Further comment on prospects for the new government will await the real results of the voting.

¶3. Methodology: We have spoken to many voters and observers in a series of forays around the country. The prognosis below was based on a multi-section, district-by-district analysis. For many districts our projections were well informed, but for others speculative, the totals corrected by perhaps 10 percent by a dash of "cant-be" and "must-be" guesswork.

¶4. (C) Turnout and Spoiled ballots: Perhaps the most closely parsed result will be turnout. We are guessing that the percentage of the 15.5 million registered voters going to

the polls will increase from just over 50 percent in 2002 to about 55 percent this time. This represents about 34 percent of the total voting age population. We have heard all over the country tales of widespread disaffection among eligible voters. Turnout could also be depressed to the extent that the campaign to curb traditional vote buying succeeds, removing a major incentive for many voters.

¶ 15. (C) However, efforts to encourage voters, particularly among youth, have had some success in countering this. A key change arguing in favor of greater turnout is the substantially broader use of media this year, including direct appeals to voters from the popular King and from various NGOs and the parties themselves, in many cases employing colloquial Moroccan and even Berber dialects. Another variable is spoiled or blank ballots, some 17 percent in 2002. We are not hearing much of a movement to cast blank ballots. Although the voting method is simpler now than last time, the ballot we have seen is confusing. We anticipate a lower rate of blanks or spoilage than last time. Our level of confidence in these prediction is less than that of the party vote counts, however.

Projected count By Party

¶ 16. (C)

Party	Local Seats	Nat'l List	Total	2002	Net Change
MP	59	6	65	55	10

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PJD	55	8	63	42	22
PI	42	4	46	48	-2
USFP	41	5	46	50	-5
RNI	33	3	36	41	-5
PPS	11	2	13	11	2
PND	11	1	12	12	0
UC	11	1	12	16	-4
PADS	8	0	8		8
AL AHD	6	0	6	5	1
FFD	4	0	4	12	-8
PT	4	0	4	0	4
Liberal	3	0	3		3
PED (Green)	2	0	2	0	2
FC	1	0	1	2	-1
PRV	1	0	1		1
MDS	1	0	1	7	-6
Independ.	2	0	2	NA	NA
Sub Total	295	30	325		22

Berber-Based Party Likely to Retain Lead

¶ 17. (C) We expect the Movement Populaire (MP), which has a rural, mainly Berber constituency, to retain its status as the leading party, and increase its number of seats to 65. The product of a union of three former parties, which made it the largest single group, the MP has overhauled its internal structures, (taking advantage of USG technical assistance offered to all parties via NDI and IRI). Though at pains to reinvent itself as a more inclusive party, the MP's traditional Berber affiliations and deep roots in rural constituencies are likely to serve it well this year. We project that the MP will rise from 55 to 65 seats, making it the largest single party in the Chamber of Deputies. Its strong showing will in part be product of the round of gerrymandering done by the Interior Ministry earlier in the year, presumably to put a lid on PJD advances.

¶18. (C) The most significant advance will be in the number of seats held by the Islamic-identified Justice and Development Party (PJD). While better organized and apparently more popular than any other single party, careful electoral engineering will ensure that this Islamic genie ultimately remains contained. We project that the PJD will rise from 42 seats to 64, an increase of over 50 percent and the largest growth in Parliamentary presence. In addition, a rival Islamist party, the Party of Renaissance and Virtue (PRV), competing in elections for the first time, will probably win one or even two seats. The PRV's seats will come at the PJD's expense. Their share of the popular vote should not be affected by the redistricting, and so would likely exceed their share of locally elected seats. The popular vote could exceed 25 percent of the total vote and would likely be reflected in votes for the national list reserved for women, producing some extra seats.

Establishment Leftists Will Be Set Back (A Bit)

¶19. (C) The leftist Union of Socialist Popular Forces (USFP), formerly Morocco's premier opposition party, has lost much of its prestige and popularity after it joined the ruling coalition in 2002. Its sclerotic leadership has been slow to adapt to Morocco's evolving political environment and is likely to lose ground this time around. We project that it will drop from 50 seats to 44. A grouping of small leftist parties that formerly boycotted the electoral process will tap into traditional USFP support. In addition, the new Labor Party (PT), led by a charismatic young businessman, is tipped by some observers as a party that could make surprising gains.

Venerable But Tarnished Party Will Tread Water

¶10. (C) The Istiqlal (Independence), Morocco's oldest party,
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still trading on its central role in the struggle to liberate the country from French domination in 1956, is by most assessments the worst managed and most poorly organized of the major political parties. However, the party still has many strongholds in the countryside, where local elites and the populace remain Istiqlalis, if only by force of habit. Moreover, the party is fielding many individual candidates of high quality, including relatively young and dynamic members of the cabinet like Social Affairs Minister Yasmina Baddou, Transport Minister Karim Ghalib, and Tourism Minister Adil Douiri. We predict that despite Istiqlal's tarnished reputation it will drop only slightly from 48 to 46 seats.

¶11. (C) Another party of significant weight, the (Centrist) National Rally of Independents (RNI), will probably lose a little ground. A recent makeover may have come too late to save its fate, although continuing broad support for the King could make its losses the riskiest of our projections. We project that it RNI will drop from 41 to 36 seats.

¶12. (C) We think the number of parties in Parliament will continue to marginally shrink to 17. In this election, in general, the seats and influence held by the smaller parties will probably diminish, likely spurring more of the consolidation that had been promoted by the King (albeit not so much recently).

The Dependent Independent

¶13. (C) One winner is certain to be Fouad Ali El-Himma, a confidante of the king who was widely viewed as the "number 2" man in the kingdom. He suddenly resigned a month ago to run for Parliament as an independent, even though the palace had been discouraging independents. We predict he will win the seat he held some years back in a desert district north of Marrakesh. A candidate who is likely to deliver big for his constituency, we believe his coattails are long enough to carry at least one of the two other members of his "independent list" in the district. If not for the Byzantine method of seat allocation which helped produce the fractured political scene, number three might win too. In previous elections, numerous independents were elected, generally closely associated with the throne, but then they were folded into the RNI. Aside from El Himma, we have no reason to believe independents running elsewhere will have a major impact. El Himma's subsequent fate will remain of broad popular interest.

The Other Tally--The popular Vote

¶14. (C) Although formally meaningless, the popular vote could have some effect. With the new transparency, it will become well known. This could make it a factor taken into consideration by the PJD and its rivals in potential coalition negotiations, and by the King, as he evaluates the prospects for the next government.

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